Dan Mitchell's Blog Continues

Dan Mitchell's blog about UCLA and UC. The original goes back to 2009 at uclafacultyassociation.blogspot.com. Daniel J.B. Mitchell is a Professor-Emeritus in the Anderson and Luskin Schools at UCLA.

Friday, August 7, 2026

Straws in the Wind - Part 426 (How Now Brown President?)

August 3, 2026

Leadership transition: Preparing for Brown's next chapter

Dear Members of the Brown Community,

My first year as Brown University's 19th president began on July 1, 2012. I was excited to be joining a university with such a distinguished and distinctive history. I remember, at the time, feeling a profound sense of optimism and gratitude, coupled with the humility that comes with the enormous responsibility of leading a great university.

More than 14 years later, the experience has been all that I could have hoped for, and more. I fell in love with Brown and all that Brown stands for: its embrace of excellence in education and research in the service of society; the priority it places on intellectual curiosity and independence; and its strong sense of community that binds students, faculty, staff and alumni together.

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And so, it was with mixed emotions that I informed the Corporation of Brown University earlier today that the 2026-27 academic year will be my last as Brown's president. This is the right decision for me and my family. And I firmly believe that it is the best path for Brown. Fifteen years is a significant tenure for any president, and in that time, this amazing community of faculty, staff, students, alumni, parents and friends showed up in so many ways to achieve the bold aspirations in the strategic plan we developed together near the beginning of my presidency. We worked vigilantly to demonstrate the value of Brown to the world, and we all can be proud of and deeply grateful for the transformative impact of a community-driven fundraising campaign that made so much of our work possible.

Brown is wonderfully poised to begin its next chapter, and a transition in leadership now will ensure the vision for the next phase is set by Brown's next leader and stewarded by them from the beginning. I am committed to ongoing work to contribute to Brown's strength and resilience until I step down at the end of the academic year.

In May of 2025, I agreed to extend my service as president past the previous June 2026 end date of my term so that I could help Brown navigate a federal funding freeze that imperiled our mission of research and education. I am proud that we came to an agreement with the federal government that restored our funding while staying true to Brown's values.

While the federal landscape remains volatile for all colleges and universities, Brown is receiving major grants for pioneering research that will lead to tremendous innovation for this country. Our faculty, staff and students are doing both basic and applied research that holds the promise of advancing medical treatment, improving human wellbeing through technological progress, helping us understand the human condition and society, and influencing policy that addresses critical issues facing nations and communities. We also continue to expand access to a Brown education and to admit the best and brightest students in alignment with our commitment to bring students with a diversity of ideas, perspectives and experiences to Brown to educate them for lives of meaning and purpose.

I will look back on my time as Brown's president as the most rewarding job I could possibly have had. Truly, it has been the opportunity of a lifetime. I have had the distinct privilege of collaborating with extraordinary colleagues — members of my senior team, faculty, staff, alumni and parents — and, above all, the joy of working alongside Brown's remarkable students. The trustees and fellows of the Corporation of Brown University have been an endless source of wise advice and support.

Together, we have moved this University forward, expanding access to education and supporting education, research and scholarship that make the world better. We have celebrated our many shared successes and supported one another through times of challenge and profound loss. Through it all, our collective focus has been on doing what is best to advance Brown as both a world-class research university and a vibrant, caring and inclusive community.

I look forward to Brown's future. Universities thrive on the excitement of new ideas and the healthy challenge of reinvention that only a new president can bring. As we navigate a transformative era for higher education in America, Brown's model — open, collaborative, curiosity-driven and student-centered — is more essential than ever. It is the right time for a new Brown president who will have the distinct privilege and pleasure of leading a university that is exceptionally well positioned for impact in the years ahead.

My husband, Ari Gabinet, and I are deeply grateful for the warm embrace we have received from the Brown, Providence, and Rhode Island communities. After more than 14 years, this is home, and we plan to contribute to Brown's continued success and support our local community in the years to come.

Chancellor Brian Moynihan will provide further information regarding the search process, which will engage members of the Brown community. While the search for the next president gets underway, we still have much to accomplish together in the year ahead. In a few weeks, as always, I will send a letter to the community that lays out goals for the coming year. This is not a time to put ambitious plans on pause. I look forward to working with all of you as we continue to move Brown forward.

In the meantime, I wish you a restful and productive conclusion to your summer.

Ever true, with love and gratitude,

Christina H. Paxson

President

Source: https://president.brown.edu/president/2026-08-03-paxson.

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Thursday, August 6, 2026

ET Phone Home Because Can't Read

UCLA Study: Kids who own cellphones have poorer reading comprehension scores than those who don't, researchers find

Holly Ober, July 27, 2026 UCLA News Release

Key takeaways

- The widespread concern about the effect of cellphones on reading comprehension in elementary school children has led to surprisingly little experimental research.
- New research by UCLA psychologists found a statistically significant relationship between owning a cellphone and lower reading scores — children who owned cellphones had poorer reading comprehension than those who did not.
- In fact, simply owning a phone correlated with worse reading comprehension, whether or not the phone was brought to school.

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School cellphone bans might seem like a good way to improve learning for elementary school children, but new research published in Behavioral Sciences shows that simply owning a cellphone correlates with worse reading comprehension. Whether a child brings the phone to school or not made no difference on the same metric, the team of UCLA psychologists and researchers found.

"We found that there's no age at which you can give a child a phone that's better or worse for reading comprehension, so it's just having a phone at all," said lead author and UCLA psychology professor Patricia Greenfield. "That's true in third grade, and it's true in sixth grade."

The study came about as researchers sought to answer the question: Do cellphones interfere with the concentration required to perform well on academic tests? They focused on determining whether the acquisition of a phone was negatively related to reading comprehension performance on tests for third and sixth graders.

The widespread concern about the effect of cellphones on reading in elementary school children has led to surprisingly little experimental research. The authors note only two previous studies in elementary school children. One showed that texting benefits the skill of grasping meaning; the other showed texting to be a negative influence on basic reading mechanics at the letter and word level.

To conduct the new study, researchers obtained approval to test children's reading comprehension with and without phones on a group of culturally and linguistically diverse children in Antelope Valley public schools and Coptic Church schools in Los Angeles. County. Phones were normally allowed in both types of settings.

The children — some who owned a phone and others who did not — read short passages. Some children had a phone with them at school, while others did not. Researchers then tested them on what they understood about each passage. Students also filled out a survey about their cellphone ownership and use.

The researchers found a statistically significant relationship between owning a personal cellphone and lower reading scores — children who owned cellphones had poorer comprehension than those who did not. This negative relationship between phone ownership and reading scores held for students who spoke English at home and those who did not. Testing for distraction from phone notifications was not possible because the students received almost no notifications during the experiments. Furthermore, there was no difference in reading comprehension when phones were on desks or out of sight. The reported age at which a child acquired their first phone did not correlate with reading comprehension skill.

"The children who brought their phones to school had the same reading scores as children who did not have phones at school that day. So, it's ownership of a phone, not the immediate presence of one, that correlates with poorer reading comprehension at the elementary school level," said Greenfield.

The study found some good news for students who do not speak English at home. For students from non-English-speaking homes who had their own phone, reading comprehension was significantly better the earlier they started using their phone to text.

"If you have a phone and if you're from a family where English is not spoken at home, it's better for reading comprehension to start texting earlier rather than later," said Greenfield. "In fact, when students from Arabic- or Spanish-speaking homes began to text in second or third grade, by sixth grade they had reading comprehension scores similar to their peers who still did not have phones."

Although results suggest no academic effect of school bans through sixth grade, cell phone bans in the elementary grades should improve children's social skills and relationships by increasing in-person interaction with peers and teachers; this is an important area for future research.

Postgraduate research assistant Marola Hanna, doctoral student Rocio Burgos-Calvillo, and assistant research professor Laura Rhinehart, all of whom are at UCLA, are co-authors of the paper.

A grant from the Flora Family Foundation supported the study.

Source: https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/owning-a-cell-phone-associated-with-poorer-reading-comprehension-schoolchildren.

at August 06, 2026 No comments:

Labels: UCLA

New Housing and Hospitality AVC

From the Daily Bruin: *UCLA appointed a new associate vice chancellor for housing and hospitality, Administrative Vice Chancellor Michael Beck announced Monday. Sarah Dundish, the director of administration and chief of staff for UCLA Housing and Hospitality, assume[d] the position Wednesday...*

The department manages UCLA's student housing, dining services, university apartments, hotels and conference facilities. Housing and Hospitality employs more than 2,600 people and serves more than 25,000 students, faculty, staff and guests... Dundish – a UCLA alumnus – will take on the role ahead of the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. UCLA's residential and dining facilities will serve as the Olympic Village for the games. About 78% of campus housing will be used to house athletes from mid-June to mid-September 2028...

Full story at https://dailybruin.com/2026/08/03/ucla-appoints-new-housing-hospitality-associate-vice-chancellor.

Note that Housing and Hospitality now has responsibility for operations of the University Club (former Faculty Club).

at August 06, 2026 No comments:

Labels: faculty center, UCLA, University Club

Straws in the Wind - Part 425 (Open Letter)

From the NY Times: *The Trump administration is making another push to persuade university leaders to address policies that it says have eroded trust with the American public, sending an open letter on Monday to college leaders asking them to respond to concerns over academic standards, admissions procedures and tuition costs. The letter, signed by Education Secretary Linda McMahon, is a significant departure from an attempt last year to incentivize universities with a so-called compact that dangled easier access to research funding for schools that embraced the administration's agenda. That proposal was widely rejected.*

...University presidents and governing boards are [now being] asked to address seven subjects — including free speech, foreign influence, artificial intelligence and academic rigor — and post the statements prominently on their websites. Ms. McMahon's letter, which does not include any funding threats, suggests that changes will improve academia's reputation among American parents and students. "The dilution of academic standards, opaque admissions policies and a domineering monoculture have badly eroded public trust," she wrote, adding that "only full candor and transparency can begin to strengthen the bonds between higher education and the American people."

It was not immediately clear how the nation's thousands of colleges and universities would respond to Ms. McMahon's letter. But Ted Mitchell, the president of the American Council on Education, which was not involved in talks with the government before the letter's release, said he regarded the missive as "a tentative handshake" between the administration and academic institutions. He predicted a significant response. "For many institutions, this is kind of a no-brainer — it's a fill-in-the-blanks kind of thing if they want to do it," said Dr. Mitchell, who noted that many of the topics Ms. McMahon asked schools to discuss had already been subjects of immense debate among education leaders...

Full story at https://www.nytimes.com/2026/08/03/us/trump-mcmahon-colleges-letter.html.

at August 06, 2026 No comments:

Labels: academic freedom, politics

Wednesday, August 5, 2026

A court decision opened the door, but...

The issue of UC hiring (or not hiring) undocumented students keeps coming up in public comments at Regents meetings. The next open Regents meetings are in mid-September. Whether the issue will be on the agenda is unknown.

From the Daily Bruin: *The California Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal in the case Umaña Muñoz v. Regents of the University of California in October 2025, letting stand the court of appeals' ruling that the University cannot bar undocumented students from holding on-campus jobs and that the UC's current hiring policies discriminate based on immigration status. However, more than eight months later, immigrant rights advocates said the UC has not taken action to comply with the ruling...*

A UC Office of the President spokesperson said in an emailed statement that... the court's decision doesn't change current hiring practices or mandate the UC to hire undocumented students, the spokesperson added. ...UC... previously argued during the court case that its hiring policies aim to comply with the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, a federal law that makes it illegal for employers to hire undocumented people. A majority of regents said not complying would risk billions of dollars in federal research grants...

Full story at https://dailybruin.com/2026/08/02/undocumented-students-push-for-uc-job-opportunities-citing-california-court-ruling.

Note: The case can be found at:

https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/ca-court-of-appeal/117570869.html.

at August 05, 2026 No comments:

Labels: diversity, politics, UC, UC Regents

More or Less?

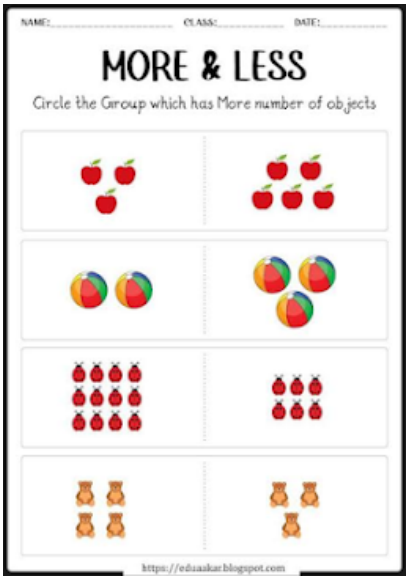
From the Daily Californian: *Twenty-three UC and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory projects were among those announced under the Department of Energy's Genesis Mission, a national initiative towards "AI-driven scientific discovery." The DOE is committing more than $5 billion to the mission, which spans national laboratories, academia and industry. Genesis Mission-funded projects will "enable researchers to … refine new approaches to accelerating scientific discovery and breakthroughs," according to Berkeley Lab spokesperson Jonathan Carter. Berkeley Lab contributions to the Genesis Mission will integrate AI with research into grid infrastructure, nuclear energy and more.*

However, for some researchers, this funding comes at an odd time given cuts to other grants. In May, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled to allow generic grant terminations by the EPA, NEH and NSF in the ongoing Thakur v. Trump lawsuit filed on behalf of UC researchers. Five days before the funding announcement, a district court ruled against President Donald Trump's administration for canceling active research grants in a separate lawsuit...

The DOE's emphasis on AI funding comes as part of the broader administration's "AI action plan," which cites a global race for AI development, and a mission to reap economic and military benefits. Last week, science and technology advisor Michael Kratsios released a report proposing a reduction in total university research funding alongside the push for increased AI

funding. Of the 278 projects awarded funding in the Genesis Mission, 151 are led by universities and 87 by national laboratories...

Full story at https://www.dailycal.org/news/campus/research-and-ideas/uc-berkeley-affiliated-ai-research-receives-funding-from-doe-despite-other-trump-funding-cuts/article_e729ccaa-62e5-411e-a099-45e2efff7896.html.



at August 05, 2026 No comments:

Labels: politics, UC-Berkeley

Straws in the Wind - Part 424

From the California Post: *The Cornell University student who declared he's "not interested in working for a Jew" got tossed from his parents' $1.75 million home in Virginia — and is now sniveling online for cash. Austin Franco, who went viral for declining a job interview at NYC startup VryfID for antisemitic reasons, took to X on Wednesday, declaring, "My parents are kicking me out." But the hater did get some good news the next day, as Cornell revealed to The Post that, unlike his disappointed parents, Alexander and Diana, the liberal upstate college won't kick him to the curb.*

The rising junior created a GiveSendGo campaign, which has already amassed more than $8,000 from twisted supporters — on top of the roughly $25,000 raised in a separate fundraiser. "I will be kicked out of my home on August 1st. Any support you can provide would be greatly appreciated, as would any advice," the 19-year-old whined... "I do not regret anything I have done. If I were to die today, I would at least know that I did so believing in myself. Thank you, and may God be with you." ...

Full story at https://nypost.com/2026/08/01/us-news/antisemitic-cornell-student-austin-franco-begs-for-cash-after-parent-boot/.

at August 05, 2026 No comments:

Labels: Cornell, diversity